

# Advancing Geography in Partnership With You: The AAG's Centennial Fund and Beyond

As the Association of American Geographers (AAG) approaches its 100th Anniversary and Centennial Celebration, you may be aware that we have initiated a major capital campaign to move our organization and geography forward in significant ways. The campaign will honor our past and help prepare and enable the AAG and the discipline of geography to meet the evolving needs of the 21st century. I invite your participation and commitment to this effort.

This campaign, titled, "Advancing Geography in Partnership With You: The AAG's Centennial and Beyond," has been in the silent stage for the past few months, and we already have over \$150,000 committed toward our campaign goal of \$2 million, a goal we hope to reach by the end 2006.

As many of you may know, the Association's basic operational expenses are satisfied by unrestricted income, largely from membership dues, annual meeting registration, and library subscriptions. Restricted income from grants and special funds supports sponsored projects and awards. The Association's only long-term assets are largely physical: our beautifully restored headquarters, Meridian Place, in Washington D.C. Yet, to meet the challenges of geography's future requires investment in the profession—investments that will allow for special training programs for our membership, provide seed money for new activities, and stimulate innovative approaches that will reach a broader public—investments that the AAG's current operating budget cannot now support. Through the "Advancing Geography Centennial Fund," and the crucial support we hope you will provide, we are laying the groundwork upon which a robust and vital future is based.

Some of you may ask—why are we starting a campaign now—at a time when the economy has slowed, return on

investments are down, and higher education budgets are being cut. The current AAG leadership believes that it is exactly during such challenging times that funds such as these are never more important. As higher education, business, and government contract, and we move through the challenges of globalization, we must find new funds through our Association to strengthen academic geography, enhance diversity in the discipline, provide leadership training workshops and forums, provide the means for capitalizing on unique opportunities, support geographic education, build upon new developments in geographic technology that bridge geography with numerous other disciplines, and foster a greater international understanding of our troubled world.

The AAG also faces major challenges in developing long-term programming aimed at gaining access for geographers to policy-makers, major foundations, private think-tanks, and the public more generally. Geography certainly has a role to play in these arenas, but will require resources to commission policy papers, hold seminars for target audiences, and seek long-range projects that will allow systematic follow-up on key geographic issues.

In addition to an Endowment Fund we are also interested in other support that will help the AAG continue to remain current in its infrastructure support (such as state-of-the-art computer software to support our membership). The Centennial Planning Committee also has a dramatic annual meeting planned for Philadelphia in 2004, which will require a special funding base. Resources to support these



Nellis

and other current needs will also be part of the Advancing Geography Centennial Fund effort.

I believe that the discipline of geography and the AAG have done a tremendous amount for me and I feel it appropriate to make a commitment back in some way to this organization and what it represents. I invite you, indeed encourage you,

to make a commitment to this campaign effort as well so that we can ensure that future generations of geographers will have the same opportunities that have been available to us. Only through the broad based support of our membership and other friends of geography will we be able to meet our goal. Commitment levels (which can be paid over the next 4 years) vary from the Scholars Level (which is from \$500 to \$999) to the Leadership Circle (commitments of \$25,000 and above).

The Advancing Geography Centennial Fund Campaign Committee is made up of the following individuals: Stan Brunn (University of Kentucky); Ron Abler (AAG Executive Director Emeritus); Janice Monk (University of Arizona); Doug Richardson (AAG Executive Director); Larry Brown (Ohio State University); Saul Cohen (President Emeritus Queen's College, CUNY); Richard Wright (San Diego State University); Patricia Gober (Arizona State University); Charles Bussing (President-Retired Geographers Association); and me (as Campaign Committee Chair). I am sure any of these individuals would welcome the opportunity to discuss the Centennial Fund at the New Orleans Meeting with you if you have any questions. The AAG will also have a brochure related to the Advancing Geography Centennial Fund effort

*Continued on page 5*

# AAG Welcomes New Staff



Solís

Dr. Patricia Solís has joined the AAG staff as Director of Research and Outreach. In her new role, she will oversee the implementation and administration of AAG projects that support geographic research and outreach as well as coordinate efforts to develop new opportunities and partnerships that build upon strategic initiatives of the organization. Solís earned a bachelor of science in physics as a Dean's Scholar, a bachelor of arts in German, and a masters degree in geography from Kansas State University. Her dissertation for the doctorate in geography at the University of Iowa (2002) analyzed a German-sponsored environmental project in Argentina to combat desertification using remote sensing, GIS, and Decision Support Systems from a critical geographic standpoint. Her academic and research interests in Geography range from remote sensing science to critical human geographies. She has received many awards, including a Presidential Fellowship and a Ford Foundation Crossing Borders Fellowship.

Patricia also has work experience as project developer and coordinator for university research institutes and a local

municipal government. She has also provided consulting services to local non-profit organizations, community service providers, entrepreneurs, and educational institutions. In accepting the position, she said, "I look forward to working with the AAG. This represents an excellent opportunity to engage the full range of my interests in geography, and to further develop spaces for the discipline of geography to bridge its academic realms with the broader national community."



Larson

From rainy Northern California, where he graduated with a degree in geography at Humboldt State University, **Oscar Larson** comes to the AAG as Sustainable Development Specialist. Before joining the staff of the AAG he worked at REI and traveled throughout Europe.

Oscar has strong interests in cartography, cartographic design, geospatial analysis, and the geography of tourism. In his free time he can be found cooking, making tourist maps, and riding his tandem bicycle with his sweetheart Jen. He is excited to meet everyone in New Orleans. ■

Continued from page 2

addressing topics from "Multimedia World Geography" to "Exploring Population, Health and Environmental Linkages," offer opportunities to further professional development and gain new perspectives.

An outstanding program is taking shape, with over 2700 presentations. Attendance at the New Orleans Annual Meeting is expected to be high, based on our current registration and trends. However, there are still hotel rooms and reasonably priced airfares available. If you haven't already done so, plan now to join us in the Big Easy for what promises to be the most exciting intellectual, cultural, and culinary event of the year for geography. ■

Doug Richardson  
drichardson@aag.org

Continued from page 3

available at the AAG booth in the exhibit area. If you are interested in making a commitment to the Advancing Geography Centennial Fund effort please feel free to send your commitment to: the Advancing Geography Centennial Fund at the AAG. Sometime in the next few months you will also receive an invitation in the mail to be part of this special fundraising effort.

We have set substantial goals, but the Association's and the discipline's needs are pressing, so I hope we can count on our membership to play a key role as we develop this special Advancing Geography Centennial Campaign Fund. As always, I welcome your comments and ideas on how we can enhance our opportunities for success in this campaign effort. See you in New Orleans! ■

M. Duane Nellis  
dnellis@wvu.edu  
AAG President

## Geography Awareness Week Activities

The third annual George O. Carney Honorary Lectureship in Geography was held at Oklahoma State University on 8 November 2002 in conjunction with National Geography Awareness Week. Dr. James R. Shortridge, University of Kansas, delivered the lecture entitled "Creating Geography from Old Photographs." More than 150 students, faculty, and guests attended the lecture, which was followed by a reception and dinner in honor of the Shortridges.

The University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown celebrated Geography Awareness Week with a series of lectures given by AAG Past President Reginald Gollgedge and UJP alumni, the presentation of information on graduate schools and career opportunities, geography exhibits in the library, and a pizza party. The week's events were also highlighted in *The Advocate*, the university's student newspaper. ■